

Old Spanish NHT Challenged by Changing Land Uses in West

The most appealing aspects of the Old Spanish Trail—the nimble mule caravans, the forbidding country, the overland treks—are challenging our efforts to preserve, protect, and guide development along America’s “crookedest, most arduous pack mule route.” The designated routes of the Old Spanish Trail are now directly in the path of expanding wind, solar, oil, and gas operations across six Western states, and remain at risk from expanding recreation activities, real estate development, and infrastructure growth.

In FY08, we set aside much needed planning work to help agencies, municipalities, and communities where resources were threatened.

Our chief challenges in FY08:

- Sharing route information effectively
- Coordinating identification of significant resources
- Developing protocols for assessing impacts
- Establishing protection and management corridors
- Designing mitigation measures for impacts to settings

Clockwise from upper left: Vicinity of Silver Lake, California, site of proposed solar farm; Well pads in northern New Mexico on Armiijo route; highway encroaching on Old Spanish Trail traces south of Moab, Utah; utility corridor within trail view shed, southern California.



Priority Issues for FY09 and Beyond

Completion of Draft Comprehensive Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement

- Trail administration is working toward completion of a draft CMP/EIS by the end of FY09.
- Contracted sections include current environment, socioeconomic analysis, pilot ethnographic study of Native American interests in the trail, a description of the natural environment, and an analysis of impacts by alternatives.
- Federal agencies and the Old Spanish Trail Association (OSTA) participated in the development of alternative concepts, including identification of high potential historic sites, high potential route segments, interpretive themes, and existing interpretive facilities in 2007.

Site Protection and Preservation Coordination

- Continue trail steward training through OSTA. In FY08, supported 8 OSTA members at national workshop.
- FY09 projects focus on the Arizona Strip; will provide training and support for handbook development.
- Develop agency-level coordinating group to share information on projects, coordinate responses and communication among agencies and trail partners, and carry out proactive protection and preservation measures.

Identification of Resources and Management Corridors

- Coordinate with managers and owners on identification of resources and management
- Assist field inventory programs on public lands (Grand Junction, Arizona Strip, Uncompaghre, elsewhere)

Viewshed Analysis of High Potential Route Segments

- Complete inventory and documentation of all high potential route segments.
- In FY09, we will host a GeoCorps intern to assist in the development of viewshed analysis and documentation protocols for the trail. This program will be continued in out-years.

Trail Condition Assessment

- Establish baseline conditions for all federal protection components, and assist in the development of trail condition assessments for non-federal components.